

# Counting subgroups of the multiplicative group

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West Coast Number Theory  
2017

Question from I. Shparlinski to G. Martin, circa 2009:

*How many subgroups does  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times := (\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times$  usually have?*

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Let  $I(n)$  denote the number of isomorphism classes of subgroups of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ .

Let  $G(n)$  denote the number of subsets of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$  which are subgroups.

Shparlinski's question concerns the distribution of values of  $I(n)$  and/or  $G(n)$ .

To set the stage: What do we talk about when we talk about distributions of arithmetic functions?

## Average order

Let  $f(n)$  be an arithmetic function.

We can ask for the *average order* of  $f(n)$ , i.e. a function  $g(n)$  so that

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Example: The average order of the number-of-prime-factors function  $\omega(n)$  is  $\log \log n$  (proof: insert the definition of  $\omega(n)$ , swap the order of summation, use Mertens's theorem).

This could be a starting point for studying  $I(n)$  and  $G(n)$ , but it doesn't really answer the question.

## Normal order

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### Theorem (Hardy, Ramanujan 1917)

*The normal order of  $\omega(n)$  is  $\log \log n$ .*

Turán (1934): Proof via an upper bound for the variance (second moment) of the form

$$\frac{1}{x} \sum_{n \leq x} (\omega(n) - \log \log n)^2 \ll \log \log x.$$

We can ask for more.

# The fundamental theorem of probabilistic number theory

## Theorem (Erdős, Kac 1940)

Let  $\omega(n)$  denote the number of distinct prime factors of a number  $n$ . Then

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{x} \# \left\{ n \leq x : \frac{\omega(n) - \log \log n}{\sqrt{\log \log n}} < u \right\} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^u e^{-t^2/2} dt.$$

In other words, the values of the function  $\omega(n)$  are normally distributed, with mean and variance both equal to  $\log \log n$ .



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Halberstam (1954): Proof by the method of moments, i.e. finding asymptotic formulas for each of the central moments

$$\sum_{n \leq x} (\omega(n) - \log \log n)^k.$$

# The fundamental theorem of probabilistic number theory

Erdős and Kac's paper establishes a normal-distribution result for a wide class of *additive functions*  $f(n)$ :  $f(p_1^{e_1} \cdots p_k^{e_k}) = f(p_1^{e_1}) + \cdots + f(p_k^{e_k})$ .

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## Definition

We say a function  $f(n)$  satisfies an Erdős–Kac law with mean  $\mu(n)$  and variance  $\sigma^2(n)$  if

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{x} \# \left\{ n \leq x : \frac{f(n) - \mu(n)}{\sigma(n)} < u \right\} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^u e^{-t^2/2} dt.$$

## Erdős–Kac laws for non-additive functions

### Theorem (Liu 2006)

*For any elliptic curve  $E/\mathbb{Q}$  with CM,  $\omega(\#E(\mathbb{F}_p))$  satisfies an Erdős–Kac law with mean and variance  $\log \log p$ .*

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### Theorem (Erdős, Pomerance 1985)

*The functions  $\omega(\varphi(n))$  and  $\Omega(\varphi(n))$  both satisfy an Erdős–Kac law, with mean  $\frac{1}{2}(\log \log n)^2$  and variance  $\frac{1}{3}(\log \log n)^3$ .*

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$\Omega(\varphi(n))$  is additive;  $\omega(\varphi(n))$  isn't!

Both are  $\varphi$ -additive: If  $\varphi(n) = p_1^{e_1} \cdots p_k^{e_k}$ , then

$$f(\varphi(n)) = f(p_1^{e_1}) + \cdots + f(p_k^{e_k}).$$

## $\varphi$ -additivity

Recall:  $I(n)$  is the number of isomorphism classes of subgroups of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ .  
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Fact: Every finite abelian group is the direct product of its Sylow  $p$ -subgroups.

So if  $G_p(n)$  denotes the number of subgroups of the Sylow  $p$ -subgroup of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ , then

$$G(n) = \prod_{p|\varphi(n)} G_p(n) \implies \log G(n) = \sum_{p|\varphi(n)} \log G_p(n)$$

and similarly for  $\log I(n)$ .

Thus,  $\log G(n)$  and  $\log I(n)$  are  $\varphi$ -additive functions, as well.

## Erdős–Kac laws for subgroups of $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$

Theorem (Martin–T., submitted)

*The function  $\log I(n)$  satisfies an Erdős–Kac law with mean  $\frac{\log 2}{2}(\log \log n)^2$  and variance  $\frac{\log 2}{3}(\log \log n)^3$ .*

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It turns out that  $A \approx 0.72109$ , while  $\frac{\log 2}{2} \approx 0.34657$ . So, typically,  $G(n) \approx I(n)^{2.08}$ .

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- $A_0 = \frac{1}{4} \sum_p \frac{p^2 \log p}{(p-1)^3(p+1)}$
- $A = A_0 + \frac{\log 2}{2} \approx 0.72109$
- $B = \frac{1}{4} \sum_p \frac{p^3(p^4 - p^3 - p^2 - p - 1)(\log p)^2}{(p-1)^6(p+1)^2(p^2 + p + 1)}$
- $C = \frac{(\log 2)^2}{3} + 2A_0 \log 2 + 4A_0^2 + B \approx 3.924$

## $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ with many subgroups

### Theorem (Martin–T., submitted)

- *The order of magnitude of the maximal order of  $\log I(n)$  is  $\log x / \log \log x$ . More precisely,*

$$\frac{\log 2}{5} \frac{\log x}{\log \log x} \lesssim \max_{n \leq x} \log I(n) \lesssim \pi \sqrt{\frac{2}{3}} \frac{\log x}{\log \log x}.$$

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### Corollary

*For any  $A > 0$ , there are infinitely many  $n$  such that  $G(n) > n^A$ .*



## Proof of Erdős–Kac for $\log I(n)$

Recall: Since every subgroup of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$  is a direct product of subgroups of the Sylow  $p$ -subgroups of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ ,

$$\log I(n) = \sum_{p|\varphi(n)} \log I_p(n).$$

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For all  $p \mid \varphi(n)$ , each  $I_p(n)$  counts the trivial subgroup and the entire Sylow  $p$ -subgroup of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$ , and so each  $I_p(n) \geq 2$ . So

$$\omega(\varphi(n)) \log 2 \leq \log I(n).$$

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For an upper bound: Write the Sylow  $p$ -subgroup of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^\times$  as

$$\mathbb{Z}_{p^\alpha} := \mathbb{Z}_{p^{\alpha_1}} \times \cdots \times \mathbb{Z}_{p^{\alpha_m}}$$

for some partition  $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m)$  of  $\text{ord}_p(\varphi(n))$ .

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$$\implies \omega(\varphi(n)) \log 2 \leq \log I(n) \leq \Omega(\varphi(n)) \log 2. \quad \square$$

## What about $\log G(n)$ ?

Given a subpartition  $\beta \prec \alpha$ , let  $N_p(\alpha, \beta)$  be the number of subgroups of  $\mathbb{Z}_{p^\alpha}$  isomorphic to  $\mathbb{Z}_{p^\beta}$ .

Lemma (immediate)

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Let  $\mathbf{b} = (b_1, \dots, b_{\beta_1})$  and  $\mathbf{a} = (a_1, \dots, a_{\alpha_1})$  be the partitions conjugate to  $\beta$  and  $\alpha$  respectively. One definition of “conjugate partition”:  $a_j$  is the number of parts of  $\alpha$  of size at least  $j$ .

# Subgroups and partitions

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As a function of  $b_j$ , the maximum of  $(a_j - b_j)b_j$  occurs at  $b_j = a_j/2$ . With this choice,  $p^{(a_j - b_j)b_j} = p^{a_j^2/4}$ . These values, corresponding to the choice “ $\beta = \frac{1}{2}\alpha$ ,” provide the largest value of  $N_p(\alpha, \beta)$ .

## Subgroups and partitions

### Lemma

For any prime  $p \mid \varphi(n)$ ,

$$\log G_p(n) = \frac{\log p}{4} \sum_{j=0}^{\alpha_1} a_j^2 + O(\alpha_1 \log p).$$

New task: If  $\mathbb{Z}_{p^{\alpha}}$  is the Sylow  $p$ -subgroup of  $\mathbb{Z}_n^{\times}$ , determine the partition  $\alpha$  (or its conjugate partition  $\mathbf{a}$ ).

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How many of the factors in  $\mathbb{Z}_{p^\alpha} = \mathbb{Z}_{p^{\alpha_1}} \times \cdots$  are of order at least  $p^j$ ? We get one such factor for every prime  $q \mid n$  such that  $q \equiv 1 \pmod{p^j}$ ; this is the primary source of such factors.

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So if  $\omega_{p^j}(n)$  denotes the number of primes  $q \mid n$ ,  $q \equiv 1 \pmod{p^j}$ , then:  $a_j = \omega_{p^j}(n)$ . (This is exactly true if  $n$  is odd and squarefree, and is true up to  $O(1)$  if not.) Inserting this into the above lemma...



## Sketchy in the extreme

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Upon summing over all primes  $p \mid \varphi(n)$ :

$$\log G(n) = \sum_{p \mid \varphi(n)} \log G_p(n) \approx \log 2 \cdot \omega(\varphi(n)) + \frac{1}{4} \sum_{p^r} \omega_{p^r}(n)^2 \log p.$$

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Replace each of the arithmetic functions above by their known normal orders to get, for almost all  $n$ ,

$$\log G(n) \approx \frac{\log 2}{2} (\log \log n)^2 + \frac{1}{4} \sum_{p^r} \left( \frac{\log \log n}{\varphi(p^r)} \right)^2 \log p = A(\log \log n)^2.$$

## Future work

To handle  $\log G(n)$ , we approximated it by a sum of squares of additive functions.

In forthcoming work, we prove an Erdős–Kac law for arbitrary finite sums and products of additive functions satisfying standard conditions.

In other words, if  $Q(x_1, \dots, x_\ell) \in \mathbb{R}[x_1, \dots, x_\ell]$  and  $g_1, \dots, g_\ell$  are “nice” additive functions, then  $Q(g_1, \dots, g_\ell)$  satisfies an Erdős–Kac law with a certain mean and variance.

Thanks!

Preprint available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/1710.00124>.